CALABAR STORIES

We have received the following stories (written out by a native) from Mr. J. C. Cotton, and print them as sent with the exception of one of two slight corrections necessary to the sense. No. 8 explains why the shell of the tortoise is composed of separate plates; a different story accounting for this phenomenon was published in the Journal for April, 1905 (p. 308). We do not remember to have met elsewhere with the theory as to the origin of the moon and stars enunciated in Nos. 4 and 5. We should like a little more information about the "gods" who figure in several of the stories. We find, in No. 6, "the god of all the earth," who is sufficiently anthropomorphic, and apparently, like the Zulu Unkulunkulu, a First Ancestor rather than a Creator. No. 7 is a curious variant of the story which the Bantu tell about the Chameleon, and the Hottentots about the Moon and the Hare. (The Zulu version is given in Callaway's *Unkulunkulu,* and a Nyanja one in the Rev. D. C. Scott's *Cyclopædic Dictionary of the Manganja Language,* s. v. *nadzikambe.*) No. 8 appears to be a combination of two separate stories. Something has evidently been omitted from No. 9. It would seem as though the animals, after being created, had had fur, feathers, &c., distributed to them as a protection against the elements, but by the time the lizard returned from his expedition to secure the sun, the stock was exhausted. "The god then told him that he was sorry he had no more hair to supply," but—as a compensation, we must suppose—he must seek shelter in the abodes of men. It is plain that this is an ætiological myth to account for the presence of lizards in houses, and for the cock crowing at dawn.

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1.

Once upon a time Monkey and Leopard were great friends. And whenever each of them had anything to eat he shared it with the other. But one day the monkey, who was then fond of fishing, caught one fish which he cooked and ate all alone. When the leopard knew this he went to the monkey and asked for his share. Upon being informed that there was none for him, he was very angry, and seized his friend, the monkey, by the tail and wanted to tear him to pieces. Then the monkey told him to raise his hands in supplication to God, and when the leopard let go his hold of him in order to raise his hands towards the sky, the monkey escaped from him and jumped up to a tree. From that day monkeys became inhabitants of trees.

2.

Once upon a time there lived upon the earth a god who had an aged wife. They had a boy who was very fond of roaming in the bush and taking home to his parents all that he chanced to come across. One day he saw in the bush something like a mound, and it was very brilliant. The little boy was very much amazed and went near and broke a piece and took it home to his parents. On some other day he went back to that same place accompanied by his father; but they saw this thing moving about and they fancied it was chasing them. The father therefore took a stone and threw at it and broke it into pieces. This brilliant mound then scattered about and flew up to the sky, and became the stars now seen by us.

3.

Once upon a time monkey and pig were friends and used to go together in search of their daily bread. One day when they were out seeking for their food, the monkey found a bamboo-nut and the pig found an oil nut. The monkey after eating his nut alone went and stole that of the pig and was chased by the pig. The monkey ran and hid himself in the bush. After a while he came out of his hiding place and

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had on his head a basket made of leaves which basket he told his friend, the pig, was given him to carry by the god. The pig hearing this and seeing the basket was very much afraid to touch him. But as the monkey found it unpleasant to carry a basket always on his head, he went into the bush and told the god all that had happened and how he had saved his life by pretending to the pig that he was the god's man. He then besought the god to give him some mark of distinction, so that when the pig saw him without the basket he might not kill him. The god therefore rubbed his face with white chalk, and from that day the monkey's face became white. This is why some monkeys have white faces. Formerly all had black faces.

4.

Once upon a time there lived an old woman who cultivated a big farm of coco-yams. Every morning when she went to her farm she always found some of her yams dug out and the leaves of many destroyed. One day as she was busy cutting the grass away from the yams, she saw a crowd of pigs in the farm eating her yams. She therefore ran after them and hit some of them on the nose with the handle of her hoe. The pig's nose was so severely struck that it swelled up and became deformed as it is now.

5.

Once there lived an old woman who had a farm, and whenever this woman went to work in the farm she was always fond of knocking her hoe on whatever thing that lay on her way. One day as she was clearing the weeds away from the yams, her hoe was full of sand, she therefore seeing some little mound, which was white all over, knocked her hoe on that mound, in order to get the sand off the hoe. But to her great surprise the mound broke and flew up to the sky like a spark and became the moon which is now visible from all parts of the earth.

6.

Once upon a time the god of all the earth had a wife who bore him twin-children—a male and female. The male was

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black and the female white. The mother was very disgusted with them as she felt herself very humiliated by their birth; but the god who knew all things told her not to be angry, as she had already born them and it would be wicked to kill them. The female child having grown up went to live in some other country as she was not loved by her mother. During her lonely journey to that other country she picked up a book which she saw dropped from the sky. When she reached her destination she settled down there and acquired the knowledge that was in the book. She married a young man of that country and had sons and daughters, who resembled herself. Her children became multiplied, and when they were strong, they drove away the black inhabitants of that country by means of the knowledge of the arts of war they had acquired from the book. Thus was created the white race who became very numerous and more learned in everything than the black race, because their black ancestor was more loved by their mother, the wife of the god of all the earth.

7.

After the world was peopled by God there was no death until a very long time. Afterward one man sickened and died. The people of the world then sent a dog to go and ask God what was to be done with the dead man. The dog went and stayed so long on the road that a sheep was sent. The sheep soon returned and reported that God said, let the dead man be buried. Afterwards the dog returned and reported that God said, let some warm ashes be put on top of the dead man's belly and he would rise again, but he was told that he was too late as the dead man had already been buried according to the message by the sheep. Hence men are buried when they die. The dog was then driven from among men and humiliated, because through him we die.

8.

Once upon a time the tortoise and the bat were intimate friends. One day both of them visited a certain friend of the tortoise. During the night the tortoise told his friend their

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host that when the food was ready he should wake the man who had on a white dress and not the man with the black dress—he himself having on a white shirt and his friend a black one. His friend the bat having heard the conversation got up during the night whilst the tortoise was sleeping and changed his dress with that of the tortoise and put his own on the tortoise. When the food was ready the host went and woke the guest with the white dress, thinking it was the tortoise; and the bat got up and ate all the food alone. After this the tortoise feeling very hungry woke up and asked for food and found out that his friend the bat had played him a trick. On the next morning a quarrel ensued and the tortoise fled to another town. Whilst he was in that town he committed a disgraceful crime and at his own request he was carried to the top of a very high tree and left there as a punishment for his crime. He stayed there several days without food and drink and at last his shame and patience gave way and he dropped to the ground and smashed his shell to pieces. Seeing a snail passing by he requested him to gather them for him and stick them together for him with his saliva. This the snail kindly agreed to do, and from that day the tortoise's shell became patchy as we now see it.

9.

In the beginning the sun was the property of the cock. The god once asked the cock to give him the sun but the cock refused. The god then called all the beasts he had created and offered them a big reward if they took the sun from the cock and gave it to him. The squirrel hearing this went and made friendship with the cock in order that he might by some unfair means take the sun from the cock; but he failed in his attempt. The lizard then went and told the cock to build a compound round the sun that it might be safe, as many were coveting it. The cock did this and the lizard then had the opportunity of getting inside by climbing over the wall, and so took away the sun to the god. The god then told him that he was sorry he had no more hair to supply but the lizard must have his abode with men in their dwelling houses. This accounts for the lizard living in dwelling houses. And when

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ever the cock crows he always asks the god to give back his sun to him.

10.

Once upon a time the snake and the rat were very good friends. The snake was richer than the rat. One day the rat told the snake that he should bring his property for them to enjoy and when they had made use of it all they would try and accumulate more wealth. The snake agreed, and they made use of all the goods. After that the rat suggested that they should go out into another country. Before starting the rat had a very good breakfast but told the snake that he need not take any breakfast as the town to which they were going was not far, and they would have more than sufficient to eat and drink on the way. They then set off but the road being so long the snake felt hungry and was very angry with the rat, whom he never saw getting tired. The rat tried to give him some excuse which the snake refused to accept, and was swallowed up by the snake. From that day the snake and the rat became the very bitterest enemies, and the former never allowed the latter to escape with impunity whenever he had the chance of swallowing him.

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